

Random Encounters

Mind War - The Mindscraper

By Ramon Arjona



The illithids and their enemies have created many powerful weapons over the centuries. One such artifact is the Annulus, which is a terrifying artifact that can reduce psionic beings to ashes (see the *Psionics Handbook*, page 137). Another artifact is the Mindscraper, which is a horrible device that threatens psionic and nonpsionic beings alike. Many of these weapons have been lost to the flow of centuries, as the illithids retreated into the far reaches of the Underdark and their former slave races -- the githyanki and githzerai (see the *Psionics Handbook*, pages 147-149) -- dispersed through Limbo and the Astral Plane. Should one of these weapons resurface, however, an event of interplanar significance could take place. Old hatred and ancient wars could take form, new legends might be written, and the foundations of reality could shake as every powerful psionic being and race scrambled to make the ancient weapon their own.

Illithids first forged the Mindscraper before the hero Gith overthrew their empire, before mortals called them "mind flayers", and before they took up residence in the Underdark. It is made of an unknown blue metal that bears some resemblance to ferroplasm (see the *Psionics Handbook*, page 138). When the Mindscraper is not held by a being with psionic powers, it dissolves into a puddle of silver goo and loses all its abilities. Only when grasped by a psionic being does it reshape itself into its true form: a small knife of the sort that might be used to scrape animal hide in preparation for tanning and curing. The Mindscraper serves a similar purpose: It "cleans" a mortal being of his or her identity so he or she will be a useful tool for the wielder of the weapon.

Activation of the Mindscraper's powers requires that the wielder hold it like a melee weapon. The Mindscraper floods the mind of its wielder with its powers when grasped this way for the first time. In combat, the Mindscraper functions as a *+5dagger of body feeding* (see the *Psionics Handbook*, page 126).

The wielder of the Mindscraper can manifest the *psychic vampire* power at will as if a 20th-level psion. This power allows the wielder to drain up to 40 power points from a victim with a successful touch attack. The wielder, however, can never gain more power points than he or she would normally get in a day with a single attack. Against nonpsionic beings or psionic beings who have no power points left, this attack deals 1 point of temporary Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma damage. The wielder gains 1 power point from such an attack. The illithid who created it always kept many slaves nearby to serve as an easy source of psionic energy to tap into if he ever needed it.

The wielder can also manifest the following powers up to 3 times/day each as a 20th-level psion: *domination*, *forced mindlink*, and *mindwipe*.

Once a week, the wielder of the Mindscraper can manifest *thrall*. The illithid who created this artifact maintained his stable of slaves through frequent use of this power.

Finally, the wielder of the Mindscraper can manifest the power *mind store* with the Mindscraper substituting for the storage crystal. If the wielder chooses to do this, the wielder's soul is transferred into the Mindscraper at the point of his or her physical death. The Mindscraper uses the wielder's psionic energy to maintain its shape and does not revert to a pile of goo while it holds the wielder's soul -- even if wielded by a being without psionic powers. So long as the wielder's soul is embedded in the Mindscraper, the artifact will not manifest any of its other powers. The wielder has 30 days to grow a new physical body as per the *mind store* spell before his or her living essence dissipates forever. Nobody knows whether the illithid who created this artifact attempted to invoke this power, but he was almost certainly unsuccessful if he did.

Destruction: The Mindscraper can be destroyed only while a soul is embedded in it through its *mind store* power. While thus inhabited by a living soul, the Mindscraper must be brought to the lich-queen of the githyanki, who alone among non-illithids knows the secret psionic geometries that will undo this artifact. The lich-queen must be shown that this is in her best interest, however, or she may try to take possession of the Mindscraper for herself. Of course, the illithids also know of this secret, but they generally prefer to keep the Mindscraper in existence.

Introducing the Mindscraper to Your Campaign

- A wizard with an interest in psionic creatures and artifacts has discovered an ancient tome that tells the history of the mind flayers. In this tome, the wizard has read of an ancient artifact that was used to enslave entire races of beings. He wishes to know whether such a thing could still exist and enlists the PCs to go looking for traces of it, starting with an old illithid settlement that is mentioned in the tome. This settlement is deep in the Underdark, and illithids may still inhabit it.
- Cartak Narg, lieutenant of Lolo Binqi the goblin psion, seeks a powerful artifact that will allow him to overthrow his short, arrogant leader and usurp the control of the goblin army for himself. He contacts the PCs hoping to form a temporary alliance with them to search for the artifact. He tells the PCs anything he must to gain their cooperation, even trying to persuade them that he wants to prevent the goblin tribes from going to war.
- Illithid have been sighted in parts of the Underdark far closer to the surface than normal, accompanied

by numerous servant creatures. They seem to be searching for something. In fact, the illithids and their servants are looking for traces of ancient artifacts near several early mind flayer settlements. They are close to discovering several important clues to the location of the Mindscraper and may even find the artifact if the PCs do not act to prevent them.

Bringing the Parts Together

As mentioned in the bulleted list above, it's possible that one of Binqi's followers may wish to find the Mindscraper for his personal use. If so, the PCs may find themselves, along with Arthes, trying to prevent the goblins from gaining possession of the artifact even as they seek to prevent Binqi's troops from gaining ascendancy in the area.

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